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Role of Broadcasts in Hungarian Revolt Is Analyzed

(This is the last of three articles on the controversy between radio commentator Fulton Lewis Jr. and the Crusade for Freedom, Inc., on the effectiveness of Radio Free Europe.)

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WASHINGTON, April 11—Radio Free Europe, the semi-official propaganda medium aimed at the enslaved peoples of the Iron Curtain countries, has a huge payroll. Fulton Lewis Jr., who has been lambasting the operation for more than six months because of its propaganda line, says there are more than 2,000 persons employed—and this is overdoing it for an outfit operating only two radio stations.

The facts seem to confirm this figure. There are 1,200 workers at the main shortwave station in Munich and 400 others at the second station in Portugal. In addition, 200 employees are engaged variously in New York City and 200 "elsewhere." Radio Free Europe doesn't think this is too many persons for the job it has to do.

RFE explains there are five networks with facilities in New York; Munich, Holzkirchen, Biblis and Schleissheim in Germany; Glorinda, Maxoqueria and Lisbon in Portugal with 29 transmitters on the air more than 2,600 hours a week.

Uses Six Languages

Radio Free Europe says it broadcasts in six foreign languages—Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian; has 10 news and information bureaus getting tips from refugees and other sources, while other workers do nothing but monitor 60 Communist radio stations and news agencies behind the Iron Curtain.

This, RFE says, takes announcers, newswriters, producers, translators, researchers, audience analysts and political specialists, as well as engineers, a large technical staff, security officers and guards.

Fulton Lewis Jr. has found much that he considers wrong with the Radio Free Europe operation, mostly its policy line which allegedly encourages the Iron Curtain countries to support their national Communist leaders, as against Soviet-directed Communism. He has almost completely ignored a charge against Radio Free Europe which received rather widespread attention at the time of the abortive Hungarian revolt in 1956.

Prominent leaders, both in Europe and the United States, and some newspaper correspondents on the scene were openly critical of Radio Free Europe in convincing the Hungarian people that the United States would help them if they revolted against Soviet domination.

Radio Free Europe has denied that its propagandists ever encouraged the peoples to revolt, but there is considerable evidence that the Hungarians "rested into" the news broadcasts a promise of liberation. The

studied by the West German Government, by the United Nations study commission which looked into the question of Russian intervention in the Hungarian revolution, and by news commentators.

Convinced U. S. Would Help

A New York Times correspondent cabled his paper from Vienna in the Fall of 1956 that many Hungarians were convinced the United States would help them against the Soviet Union. He said he heard criticisms of U. S. broadcasts from Soltan Tildy, former president of Hungary, and from Major-General Bela Kiraly, the revolutionary who became commandant of Budapest for a few brief days.

According to this news account, both men said the RFE broadcasts had been useful in the early days of the revolution, but harmful later because they incited the Hungarians to further revolts and strikes, whereas the Nagy Government needed to have the revolutionaries return to work.

The Times correspondent said it was his opinion, shared by several colleagues, that the real responsibility rested with the U. S. Government since both the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe had quoted freely from speeches by President Eisenhower and other top officials which, he said, tended to build up hopes of liberation.

The radio stations, he said, re-

corded as "news" the speech by UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., on Nov. 2 in which he recalled pledges given by the United States to assist the brave Hungarian people in their struggle for freedom. That speech was made when it looked as if Hungarian revolution against Soviet Communism had succeeded.

Deny Rush Promises

Officials of RFE denied charges that rash promises of Western aid were made. The UN committee took pains to learn from witnesses what precise role, if any, RFE had taken in the events of October and November. The UN committee said in its official report:

"The committee was told that during the uprising, Radio Free Europe was 'very encouraging' and obviously sympathetic. Listeners had the feeling that Radio Free Europe promised help, although witnesses said clearly that it gave no reason for expecting military help. Rather, the general tone of these broadcasts aroused an expectation of support."

"It would appear that certain broadcasts by Radio Free Europe did create an impression that support might be forthcoming for the Hungarians. The committee feels that in such circumstances are called for in international broadcasting."

Chancellor Adenauer of the Federal Republic of Germany

stated in January 1957, that an investigation ordered by him showed no basis in fact for assertions that RFE had promised the Hungarians armed assistance from the West. However, he admitted remarks were made which were likely to cause misinterpretations.

'Considered Settled'

Adenauer reported, rather obscurely, that discussions had taken place "which resulted in personnel changes" following the Hungarian incident and he added: "I believe that the matter can be considered settled for the time being."

A Washington correspondent, who was in Vienna at the time, said he had no first-hand knowledge of the role played by Radio Free Europe although he had heard that American promises of liberating the Soviet satellites were played to the hilt by RFE.

Beyond this, he said he had interviewed scores of escapees from Iron Curtain countries who complained, more than anything, that the broadcasts were often "stupidly inaccurate." They would, he said, report trends and events in a country to listeners who needed only to look around them to see that they did not accord with the facts. This newspaperman said he suspected Radio Free Europe picked up many wild items from underground sources without checking them thoroughly.